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Chief, Language and Area School

28 January 1960

Plans and Policy Staff

DD/P Language Requirements Survey

Prepared by [REDACTED] in
October 1957

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1. I have made a quick review of the DD/P language requirements survey which was conducted in the fall of 1957 and thought you might be interested in my reaction. The study looks like a pretty good beginning and gives us a toe hold on this problem which, I agree with [REDACTED] ought to suffice for our immediate purposes. However, when the climate is right, we ought to try to have this study updated and at the same time seek a much more comprehensive examination of DD/P's requirements based on realistic proficiency standards.

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2. For the record, here are my offhand observations about the study.

General

a. DD/P is unduly influenced in its statement of requirements by a backward glance at its assets. Nowhere is this more apparent than in a comparison of the requirements of EE (which is blessed with language riches) and NEA (which has a paucity of such skills). To argue that operational circumstances in the Near East and Africa areas make foreign language skills unnecessary (while at the same time contending that they are vital in EE!) flies in the face of all current professional advice in this matter. As you know, a veritable clamor is being made by the Congress, the OCB, and many other Government and private officials to the effect that U. S. representatives abroad must know the languages and customs of the country in which they serve if they are to communicate effectively with the foreign governments and peoples with whom they are dealing. I am afraid that what really is happening is that CIA may be adjusting some of its operations to fit its language capabilities in areas where esoteric languages abound. We ought to ask ourselves very seriously whether it is more important for the

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b. Each component, and particularly the senior staffs, has neatly ducked the rotation problem in determining its language requirements. The [] Staff, for example, says it has no language requirements; yet its people expect to rotate overseas. It is probably unrealistic to expect that individual components can solve this aspect of the requirements problem. It can only be handled properly by a central authority in DD/P who has the correct overview. This central authority has to be tied in closely to long-range operational planning and also to the whole personnel picture, both short and long range. We must, in addition, have the authority and the courage to set realistic proficiency standards for persons operating in the esoteric language areas.

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By Component

a. TSS - good job. Looks like they made an honest effort to evaluate requirements.

b. WH - number of linguists required looks OK, but proficiency standards too low. How can WH conduct its operations with only 14 fluent Spanish speakers and 1 fluent Portuguese speaker?

c. WE - good.

d. SR - fair, but requirements seem strongly influenced by assets. Standards aren't hard-nosed enough for division which must have so many multi-linguists.

e. SE - pretty good except for [] where they watered down their standards.

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f. NEA - completely unrealistic! One can only conclude that we expect to go on indefinitely conducting most NE and AF operations in English!

g. FE - pretty good except for some of the esoteric languages like Vietnamese, Laotian and Cantonese (Chinese).

h. EE - very good.

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1. IQ - weak.

1. FI, [REDACTED] and CI - perhaps OK for Headquarters, but ignores the rotation problem.

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